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ABSTRACT

This newsletter issue discusses time management techniques for parents of special needs children. Techniques include changing one's attitudes about perfection, prioritizing tasks, having a back-up plan, learning to say "no," asking for help, keeping things simple, hiring others, using waiting time wisely, and doing two things at once. Household time-saving tips are offered in the areas of preparing things the night before to avoid harassed mornings, grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, reducing clutter, and laundry. Extra demands of the holiday season are then considered, offering the suggestions of purchasing holiday gifts throughout the year, buying gift wrap and greeting cards in bulk, shopping from catalogs, and giving gift certificates. Holiday entertaining tips include entertaining on Sunday, having open houses, and having a trim-the-tree or sledding party. Suggestions geared specifically to the special child include making sure the special child participates in chores as much as possible and hiring a babysitter to entertain the special child while the parents are entertaining. The final page of the newsletter comprises a psychologist's advice on how to make religious confirmation ceremonies meaningful experiences for both the special child and the parents. (JDD)

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Special Parent ★Special Child★

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MANAGING TIME

Managing time effectively is a challenge for everyone in today's complex society. The demands of work, household and family life can crowd our days and nights with so many bids for attention that it is easy to see why many of us feel overwhelmed. Allocating time is an even more pressing problem for the special parent because of the time consuming needs of the special family member.

Most of us are able to juggle our responsibilities for a certain period, but even the most organized household finds that the holidays are a mixed blessing. The extra preparations and demands on our time often bring frazzled nerves and exhaustion along with the joys of the season!

In this issue we will explore ways you as a special parent can manage your time more effectively with practical hints you can use during the hectic holiday months, and throughout the rest of the year as well.

Finding time

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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The major complaint of special parents is that there never seems to be enough time. Dressing, feeding and caring for their special child along with managing a busy family and work schedule can become an exhausting merry-go-round. Here are some suggestions on how to break the cycle of too many demands, not enough time.

Change your attitude. If you are the type of person who spends an enormous amount of time completing each and every task to perfection, chances are you will never feel satisfied. If you can teach yourself to accept a less-than-perfect job you will ease self-inflicted frustration and increase your overall productivity.

Prioritize your tasks. Time managers recommend that you list the tasks you must accomplish, and organize them on a daily basis in order of *importance and urgency*. For example, although it might be important to you to reorganize a messy hall closet, it certainly isn't urgent. Those kind of chores can be put off to another day without real detriment to anyone's health or safety. Urgent tasks, on the other hand, require immediate attention or things will go seriously awry.

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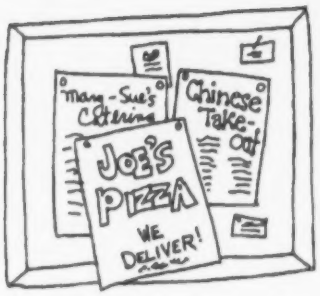

After you have cleared up the urgent tasks to the best of your ability, start in on those activities that you have listed as important. If the day ends without finishing allotted tasks, transfer them to the next day's list. Don't waste time by dwelling on the unfinished ones. Remember, they are not urgent and can be handled tomorrow, if not today. Give yourself credit for the day's achievements. If you find the tasks on your "important" list never seem to get done, perhaps you have heaped too much on yourself for one day. Rethink the value of each task in order of its importance and keep your daily list simple.

Have a back-up plan. If it rains on the day you were going to rake leaves, or the car won't start on your errand day, be sure to have a back-up list of chores just for such circumstances. In addition to accomplishing something, you can feel good about using time that normally would have been wasted.

Learn to say no. This is very difficult for most of us since it often means saying no to children, spouses, friends, relatives and community organizations. If you have to think to yourself "How will I ever find the time?" whenever a request is made, that should be your signal to say no. Just because someone has asked you to do something doesn't mean you must comply. Many people are under the mistaken impression that refusals will incur dislike. This is simply not so.

Remember that your life changes and evolves. As your children grow older and fewer demands are made of you, chances are you will have more time to say yes to good causes and activities that genuinely appeal to you.

Ask for help. Unfortunately, many people feel that asking for help implies weakness, incompetency or both! Going it alone, however, especially if you are a special parent, is a needless complication. Help is often available from parents, friends, spouses, children, neighbors and community organizations, just for the asking. But if you don't ask, no one will know of your needs. Asking for help and getting it will improve the quality of your life and your family's.

Keep it simple. Let your motto be "less is more." Review your daily routine and find ways to cut down—fewer steps, fewer errands, less duplication of tasks, less elaborate meals, for example. Even a slight alteration in your household schedule can add up to increased time and less wear and tear on your nerves.

Hire others. This needn't be as expensive as it sounds. Hiring a teenager to rake your leaves, wash your car or run errands is money well spent. Other chores that you can delegate to others for a nominal fee include housecleaning, home repairs, laundry, dry cleaning, diaper service (including pick-up and delivery), window washing, clothing alterations and mending.

Make time work for you. Use waiting time wisely. Parents of special children spend a tremendous amount of time waiting—in doctors' offices, at school bus stops, in therapy and clinic waiting rooms. You can make these wasted hours

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work for you by catching up on personal reading, letter writing, balancing your checkbook, making shopping lists, mending, knitting or sewing. Waiting in the car can be well spent by cleaning out your handbag, straightening the glove compartment, cleaning the car windows.

Do two things at once. Mending, sewing and ironing are good activities to pursue while watching TV. Try redoing your address book or updating your Christmas card list during program breaks. Get a long cord for your phone or better yet use a portable phone. That way you can combine telephone calls with such household chores as dusting, cooking and dishwashing.

Household time-saving tips

Household chores are a fact of life. Meals must be prepared, clothes laundered, children gotten off to school, appointments kept. Here are some practical timesavers that will be helpful throughout the year and especially around the holidays.

Avoid the morning blahs. How we get up in the morning often sets the tone for the entire day. If your morning includes a hunt for lost shoes or missing homework assignments and children stranded at bus stops, here are some tips to smooth out your harassed mornings.

- Do as much as you can the night before. Fill the coffee pot, set the table, unload the dishwasher. Make school lunches after the evening meal, using dinner leftovers, if possible.
- Lay out your own clothes and help your children lay out theirs.
- Train your children to let you know the night before if they need something for school the next day or look in their schoolbags.
- Bathe and shampoo hair the night before. This will avoid morning bathroom lineups and ensuing arguments over whose turn is next.
- Give each child his or her own alarm clock or clock radio. Encourage your children to be responsible for their own wake-up calls.
- Wake up earlier yourself. Even fifteen minutes for a quiet cup of coffee before the day looms large can make a real difference.
- Keep breakfast simple. Save pancakes and homemade waffles for the weekends. Cold cereal, fresh fruit or fruit juice, peanut butter on toast are easy to prepare, nutritious and make for no-fuss breakfasts.
- Have low, child-level hooks and shelves for your children's jackets, books, school bags, and lunch boxes. Train them as much as possible to be responsible for their own belongings.

Marketing hints. One of the most time-consuming household chores is grocery shopping.

- Whenever possible shop at stores that accept fax or phone orders for pick-up at your convenience. Some stores even deliver.
- Always shop with a list, and categorize your list to coincide with the store's layout.
- Have a week's menus made up in advance and make once-a-week shopping your goal. If you have space, buy in bulk; for example, stock up on paper goods, cleansers, canned goods, pet food.
- Teach yourself to substitute for missing recipe ingredients. This will help you avoid running to the store for just one item.

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Suzanne Della Corte, M.S., for 15 years co-director of the school, is responsible for curricula, staff development and supervision. She is author of numerous research projects in the field and has edited psychology textbooks for a leading New York publisher.

• Choose a supermarket line with a bagger as well as a checker. If there is none, then bag your own groceries according to how they will be put away. For example, put all frozen foods in one bag destined for the freezer, staples in another to go into the pantry, etc.

• Try to shop mid-week. On Mondays the grocery shelves are usually empty and the aisles clogged with incoming merchandise. Fridays and Saturdays most markets are jammed with shoppers. Late night or 24-hour marketing might fit your schedule better.

• Shop alone, if at all possible. Children tagging along slow up the marketing process.

• Coordinate errands so you don't have to crisscross from one side of town to the other.

Cooking hints. All children, including your little ones and your special child, can help with mealtime chores.

• Setting the table, folding napkins, getting milk and butter from the refrigerator are chores that most children are capable of and will ease your work load.

• Keep week day meals simple and easy-to-prepare. Save gourmet cooking for weekends when you have more leisure time. Designate one night a week as "take out" for pizza, fried chicken, etc. Use paper plates for this one night as a real time-saving treat.

• Let others take over. Most teens enjoy planning the menu and preparing one meal each week. Enlist your spouse's help, too. Some men really love to cook once given the opportunity.

• Use your labor-saving appliances. Crock pots, for example, are ideal for starting dinner in the morning or the night before. This handy appliance is wonderful to slow cook hearty soups and stews. Learn to use your microwave for more than reheating.

• When you cook something that freezes well such as stew or spaghetti sauce, make enough for several meals and freeze the rest.

• Create your own TV dinners by serving up leftovers in individual foil trays. These are quick and handy when you are pressed for time.

• Make two meals out of one. Meat loaf for dinner makes a delicious sandwich for lunch. Cooked pasta can be turned into pasta salad with leftover vegetables added for extra zest.

• Plan simpler menus. It is less time consuming and just as tasty to bake a potato along with the roast than to mash the potatoes separately. Think of your own food preferences and ways you can simplify meals without detracting from family favorites.

Clean up. Cleaning up can be made less of a hassle if your family members can be taught how to use appliances safely. This includes the washer and dryer, vacuum cleaner, dishwasher.

• Assign specific chores to all your children including your special child. Expect them to be done and chances are your children will comply. Praise your children for a job well done.

• Avoid blanket statements such as "clean up your room." This is too abstract and meaningless, especially to your special child. Assign concrete, sequential, do-able tasks. Even if the beds are not done with hospitable corners, this chore should be the child's responsibility and hers alone. Assigning chores and then redoing them yourself is just another way of doubling the work load.

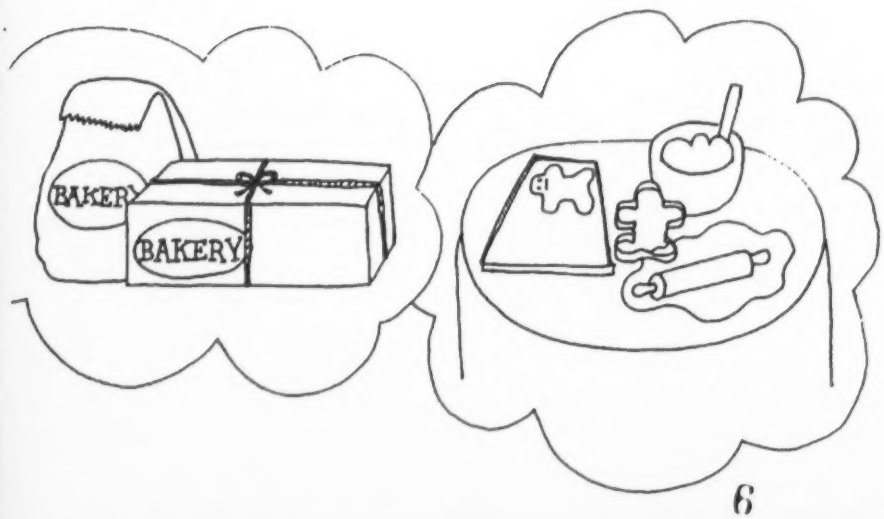
• Think of ways to simplify chores. Replacing bed linens with comforter and quilts, for instance, makes it easier for even the youngest child to make the bed neatly.

Reduce clutter. Nothing adds to chaos more than masses of clutter lying around. It's best to be *very* strict about getting rid of unused or unwanted possessions. This includes stacks of magazines with recipes waiting to be cut out, newspapers, junk mail, clothing that is no longer stylish or wearable, toys the children have outgrown, outdated or broken appliances, furniture waiting to be fixed.

- Be ruthless. If you don't need it or want it and it hasn't been used in a year, discard, donate or better yet have a garage sale.
- Try cleaning one room. Even if the rest of the house is messy, one area of order will make you feel better and encourage you to go on.
- Never enter or leave a room without doing one thing—no matter how small—to improve it.
- Set aside one room in the house where the family can snack, play board games and where messes don't have to be cleaned up immediately. Designating a room for this purpose saves wear and tear on the others.
- Make a rule not to eat in bedrooms. This prevents sticky glasses and stale foodstuffs from collecting.
- Make room for possessions. Everything in its place and a place for everything only works if members of your family have such a place. For younger or disabled family members make sure shelves and hooks are within easy reach. Color code boxes for toys and possessions for each of your children.
- Allow your children's own rooms to reflect their individual preferences. You might feel most comfortable if your bedroom is just so, but that doesn't mean that others share your neat-as-a-pin outlook. Constantly cleaning and rearranging your child's bedroom is wasted effort if she's the type who finds messy shelves comforting. If this bothers you, keep the doors shut; as long as things are reasonably clean this should not be too bothersome.

Laundry. The mountains of laundry that are the by-product of a typical family are staggering. Here are some time-savers to reduce the load!

- Teach your children to hang up their bath towels to dry overnight instead of using up a fresh supply each day. Encourage your children to hang up their clothes and jackets. Wrinkled items seem to need more frequent washing.
- Send out your spouse's shirts. It's not a luxury when you consider the time you spend washing, starching and ironing.
- Use wash-and-wear; save garments that require ironing for special occasions.
- Use separate laundry baskets, one for dark clothes and one for light, and train your children to place their laundry in the correct baskets.
- Make sure your children turn soiled clothes right side out.
- Fold and hang clothes the minute the dryer stops to prevent wrinkles.
- If your family members are capable, then by all means teach them to be responsible for their own laundry. Younger children can be responsible for putting away their clean clothes.



Holiday time savers

All the above hints should help you manage your time throughout the year. The holiday season with its extra demands made on your precious reserves requires even more precise time-saving techniques. Here are some suggestions to make your holidays joyful.

Think gift giving all year long. Get in the habit of purchasing gifts all year long that can be used for holiday gift giving and other occasions as well. End of the year clearances and close-out sales are ideal for picking up and stockpiling gifts. Keep a supply of hostess-type presents on hand at all times so you don't have to make special trips for just one gift item.

Buy in bulk. Buy seasonal gift wrap in large enough quantities so that you can purchase and wrap gifts throughout the year. Have a quantity of greeting cards on hand so you don't have to keep running to the card store. Make sure to order printed return address labels ahead of the holiday season and buy stamps in quantity.

Open charge accounts. As long as you don't overspend, opening charge accounts in shops you frequent the most has many advantages. Charge customers usually get preferential treatment, access to special sales and shop-at-home services. Large stores are happy to take your telephone orders and will gift wrap and mail to different addresses.

Shop from catalogues. They are life savers for people pressed for time. Specialty items, toys, books, clothes and giftware of every description are available through catalogues. Once your name is on a mailing list you can be assured of a steady supply! Take advantage of catalogues with toll-free telephone ordering departments. Most mail order houses offer individual service and will ship to many different addresses for you for a shipping and handling fee. Mail order shopping does require a major credit card for phone-in purchases but is worth considering because of the time you save and the ease of the transaction.

Give gift certificates. This type of gift is well received because it can be tailor made to the recipient's interests and likes. In addition to giving gift certificates redeemable at department stores and boutiques, certificates can be purchased for beauty parlors, beauty spas, nail salons, restaurants, concert and theatre tickets, introductory lessons and reservations at hotels and inns.

Holiday entertaining

Holiday entertaining needn't be elaborate or expensive in order to reflect the joy and enthusiasm of the season. Here are some suggestions for some fun-filled get-togethers for you and your family.

Entertain on Sunday. For some reason Sunday entertaining is more relaxed and less formal than Saturday night sit-down dinner parties.

• Sunday brunch, for example, is easy to prepare, especially if you serve buffet style. Holiday brunch menus can include a variety of egg and cheese favorites, and other make-ahead dishes you can keep hot on warming trays. Add bakery croissants, coffee cakes, holiday cookies, a festive cranberry juice punch, different kinds of coffees and teas.

• Sunday supper is another popular choice. Most people are eager for diversion on a Sunday evening before the work week begins and appreciate invitations for early evening pot luck suppers. The menu can include hearty chili or a thick bean-style soup, a salad, different kinds of

breads and a holiday cake and ice cream to round out the supper.

Open house is another less formal type of holiday entertaining. Invite guests to drop by from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., for example. Serve eggnog and fruitcake for the adults and cookies and punch for the children.

A trim-the-tree party is a nice way to include friends and neighbors as well as your own family. Make sure you have located all your decorations and set them out with enough tree hangers. Provide bowls of popped corn and cranberries for everyone to string. Refreshments for this type of party can be very simple—mulled cider for the grown ups, fruit punch for the children and doughnuts for all. Don't forget some things for an outside tree, such as popcorn and suet balls for the birds.

Sledding and skating parties are other activities where every one can join in the fun. Bring thermoses of hot chocolate and coffee along with you or invite everyone back to your house afterwards.

Other entertaining hints. For all of your entertaining endeavors it's always nice to have lots of help. Hire the neighborhood children to help set up, serve and clean up or pay your own children if they are capable and willing.

• Hire a babysitter to entertain your children in your own home, especially your special child. Then you can relax and concentrate on your hostess duties without worrying about your youngsters' needs.

Finding time for yourself

When you find some precious free moments, get in the habit of spending them on yourself. Unfortunately, most of us, particularly special parents, feel guilty if we don't devote all of our waking hours to taking care of others. We mistakenly suppress our needs and even think of them as unimportant or unworthy.

Nothing could be further from the truth. All of us need time—especially at the holidays—to pause, reflect and regroup. A half hour to take a relaxing bath, a short nap, a walk or make a phone call to a friend will refresh, invigorate and replenish our reserves of energy.

Do's and don'ts

Do encourage the whole family to share in the work load, especially around the holidays when all hands are needed. Praise and reward your children for their cooperation.

Do make sure your special child participates in chores as much as she is able. This will avoid jealousy and complaints of partiality from siblings.

Do keep a large calendar with all appointments and upcoming events clearly posted. This will help you schedule mealtime hours and car pooling duties more effectively.

Do shop early, the earlier the better. Be on the lookout for holiday fairs or church-sponsored holiday craft shows which begin as early as September. Department stores and discount centers also have holiday items early in the season.

Do cook ahead. Cookies, cookie dough, cakes, pie crusts, stews, soup, sauces can be frozen weeks ahead of time.

Do relax. Holidays are special times to see family and friends. If you are tired, harassed and worried, everyone's enjoyment is diminished. Keep things simple and informal, and chances are you will have the best managed holiday ever.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S CORNER

Your special child and religious confirmation

by George Popper, Ph. D.

Religious festivals and "rites of passage" are important times for many of us, affording the opportunity to get together with family and friends, renew old ties and reaffirm our religious beliefs. But as with all of life's major events, they are usually times of joy and happiness with hidden potential for stress and discomfort.

For the parent of a special child, however, particular concerns and questions arise. Can my child learn all that is required? Will my child behave in front of all those people? Will my place of worship allow my child to participate? Do they have a program that can meet my child's special needs? Will the congregation accept my child?

Many parents have had their special son or daughter confirmed or bar mitzvahed. For the most part even the severely impaired child can participate to some degree, although he or she may not be able to handle the entire ceremony. It is vital to focus on what is possible and turn those portions of the ceremony into a meaningful experience for both parent and child.

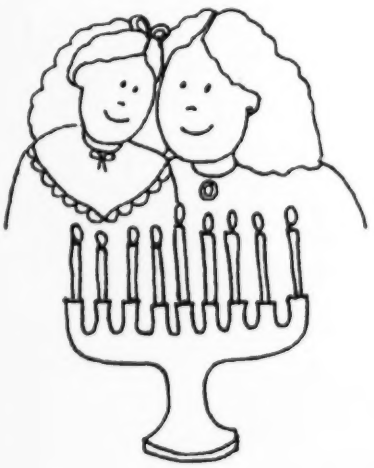
Time is especially important when planning religious education for your special child. It will take longer for your special needs child to learn what is required of him or her, to become accustomed to the rituals, to the house of worship and to the other worshipers. Some parents are concerned that their child will be overwhelmed if they start religious education too soon or that it will conflict with "regular" school. Parents who have gone through the confirmation process, however, generally report that early training makes it much easier and far less stressful. Even children with serious problems were able to do well.

Finding an appropriate program for religious instruction for the special child is vital. Seek recommendations from other parents, your religious leader or others associated with religious training. Your local Association of Retarded Citizens or your child's school is another valuable resource. In many instances, organized programs have been developed to meet the needs of special children. In addition, private tutors may be available to assist your child.

Using specific information from your church or synagogue, your child's regular classroom teacher can work with you to develop the right instructional approach to help your child learn what he or she needs to know for the ceremony.

Like all other children, your special child will benefit most from a consistent, supportive educational approach. Parents need to understand that teaching a child with learning problems to memorize prayers and other details of religious worship can be frustrating. Maintaining a calm attitude can be difficult at times, but is essential for your child to succeed.

Becoming a part of your religious community can give your special child a sense of belonging and purpose. Helping your special child arrive at this landmark can be even more rewarding for you as parents.



Illustrations by Leah Spring